

taste

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S SOURCE FOR DINING NEWS

candy creativity

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**Chocolatier
Norman Love.**

SARAH COWARD/THE
NEWS-PRESS

contact us

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Candy glut?

KICK IT UP

Local pastry chefs, bakers and bartenders share their tricks for making use of all those Halloween treats.

By Annabelle Tometich
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The Halloween candy surplus is almost inevitable. Kids come home with pillowcases overflowing with Kit Kats and Dum Dums. That extra bag of Milky Ways you bought turned out to be overkill. The dozens of trick-or-treaters you planned for were just two in reality.

Sure, you could eat all the candy as is, but why not do something fun with it? We asked local pastry chefs, bakers and bartenders to come up with creative uses for those fun-sized sweets.

And while you've got the whisks out, why not look at those classic candy bars through the eyes of chocolatier Norman Love? His world-class recipe for peanut-butter-caramel bars – his version of Snickers – is here as well.

Preheat the oven, roll up your sleeves, and make the most of the Halloween sugar rush for days to come.



ANNABELLE TOMETICH/THE NEWS-PRESS

TWIZZLER STICK MARTINI

Brad Ruth, bar manager at Ford's Garage in downtown Fort Myers, starts this drink with a strong base of rum, gin and vodka to help balance the other layers of sweetness. His citrus-y additions would complement any tart candy garnish. He chose a blood-red Twizzler swizzle stick and a skull-shaped gum drop.

- ½ ounce rum
- ½ ounce gin
- ½ ounce vodka
- ½ ounce triple sec
- splash grenadine syrup

- splash Sprite
- splash pineapple juice
- splash orange juice
- 1 cube dry ice (optional)
- 1 Twizzler
- 1 gum drop skewered on a cocktail straw

» **Combine ingredients in a martini shaker over ice.** Shake well and strain into a martini glass.

» **Garnish with Twizzler and gum drop.** Using tongs, drop in dry ice just before serving.

ONLINE

Visit news-press.com to see time-lapse videos of Norman Love making his candy bars, and Justin Schaffer making his cookies.



Butterfinger cupcakes from Perfectly Scrumptious in Bonita.

BUTTERFINGER CUPCAKES

Amanda Buckner-Wood, owner of Perfectly Scrumptious in Bonita Springs, has a sweet spot for Butterfinger candy bars. "They're my absolute favorites," Buckner-Wood said. "They have that great texture that works really well in these cupcakes." Buckner-Wood makes her cupcakes from scratch, but, to save time for the home cook, she's offered a cake-mix based recipe kicked up with her butterscotch sauce.

- 1 box yellow cake mix water, vegetable oil, eggs as called for on the box
- 10-12 fun-sized Butterfinger bars, finely chopped
- 1 container chocolate frosting, store-bought or made using your favorite recipe
- baking spray

For butterscotch sauce:

- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt

» **For butterscotch sauce, cook butter, water and corn syrup,**

stirring over medium heat until melted and combined. Add sugar, stir until dissolved. Without stirring boil the mixture until it is dark around the edges, four to eight minutes, then stir until brown. Remove from heat and add heavy cream, stir until smooth, stir in vanilla and salt.

» **Preheat oven to 350 degrees.** Line cupcake pan with paper liners and spray with baking spray.

» **Prepare cake mix per instructions on box,** then stir in butterscotch sauce until you can taste it and it is well incorporated.

» **Fold in about ¼ of the chopped Butterfingers** with a rubber spatula.

» **Divide batter evenly into cupcake tins,** filling each about ¾ full.

» **Bake 18-22 minutes** or until toothpick inserted into the center of the cupcake comes out clean. Allow cupcakes to cool in pan 5-10 minutes before removing, and let them cool completely before frosting.

» **Frost cupcakes with chocolate frosting** and sprinkle with remaining Butterfinger pieces.



Cookies, Irresistible Confections in south Fort Myers.

TWIX-CRUSTED SUGAR COOKIES

When not hand-crafting chocolates, Justin Schaffer of Irresistible Confections confesses he's a Twix fan. He starts these simple cookies with a premade, refrigerated sugar-cookie dough, but feel free to substitute your favorite sugar-cookie dough recipe as the base.

- 1 package Pillsbury refrigerated sugar cookie dough
- 8-10 fun-sized Twix bars

» **Freeze Twix bars overnight** and pulverize in food processor or crush in a plastic zip-top bag. Set aside.

» **Preheat oven to 350 degrees.**

» **Mix ½ to ¾ of the crushed Twix bars into the cookie dough.** Using an ice-cream scoop or large spoon, scoop out 2-ounce portions of cookie dough and roll into balls.

» **Pat the tops of the dough balls** in the crushed-up Twix mixture until well coated. Place balls, Twix-side up onto baking sheet and flatten slightly.

» **Bake nine to 13 minutes** or until edges are set.



Chocolatier Norman Love pipes whipped peanut butter ganache onto what will become a peanut caramel bar, Loves' version of a Snickers bar, at the Fort Myers Chocolate Salon. SARAH COWARD/THE NEWS-PRESS

NORMAN LOVE'S PEANUT BUTTER & CARAMEL BARS

Despite years of working in the world's best pastry kitchens, Norman Love admitted to enjoying a Snickers bar or Almond Joy on occasion. "They're the classics everyone grew up with," Love said. He and his staff have been reinventing those classics for years, using premium ingredients and artisanal techniques. Get some sugar in you, roll up your sleeves and give his peanut butter-caramel bars a shot.

For ganache:

- 6 ounces heavy whipping cream
- 1¼ ounces corn syrup
- 14 ½ ounces milk chocolate, chopped or in pieces
- 1½ ounces butter, room temperature

» **Boil cream and corn syrup,** and pour over chocolate. Stir until smooth and shiny like fudge. Add butter and stir until incorporated.

» **Pour into a 13x9 pan fully lined in plastic.** Allow chocolate to set in the refrigerator before adding next layer.

For peanut butter, peanuts layer:
16 ounces creamy peanut butter

- 8 ounces chocolate, melted and room temperature
- 8 ounces honey-roasted peanuts

» **Mix room-temperature milk chocolate and peanut butter** until fully combined and fluid.

» **Pour mixture over refrigerated ganache layer in pan** and sprinkle with honey-roasted peanuts, pressing lightly to make sure they are secure. Place tray in refrigerator until firm before adding caramel layer.

For caramel ganache:

- 8 ounces sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ vanilla bean, sliced length-wise
- 2 ounces corn syrup
- 6 ounces heavy cream
- 2 ounces butter
- 6 ounces milk chocolate, melted and room temperature
- 6 ounces dark chocolate, melted and room temperature

» **Heat cream** and hold hot in pot or microwave while making caramel.

» **Stir corn syrup with vanilla bean and sugar** in large pot over medium heat until melted and golden. Slowly add hot cream to caramel and stir continuously until bubbling stops. Be careful, the pot will splatter when cream is added.

» **Add butter and stir** until incorporated thoroughly. Add melted chocolates and stir until fully incorporated, then, using an electric mixer at high speed, whip until cool and fluffy. Spread over top of the set peanut butter layer and return to refrigerator.

» **When final layer is set, unroll the layered bar** from the pan and place on cutting board. Using a knife run under hot water and wiped dry, slice the bars into inch-wide strips running the knife under hot water and drying after each cut.

» **Cut into length of your choosing.** Finish by coating in melted chocolate or serving bite sized in paper cups.

Makes about 18 bars or 100 bites.